Patterns and perception of complementary and alternative medicine use by patients in western Nepal

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Abstract
Aim This study aims to investigate the patterns of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) use and perception of CAM use amongst patients attending CAM clinics in Pokhara Sub-Metropolitan City (PSMC), western Nepal.
Subject and Methods A cross-sectional survey was carried out on 501 proportionally selected patients attending 52 CAM clinics in PSMC. Data were collected using semi-structured questionnaires consisting of 16 questions related to demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, indications, and patient’s perception of CAM use. Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis.
Results The patients with a higher education level, higher income, and aged above 40 years were found more likely to use CAM. Belief in the advantages of CAM therapy (n=308, 61.5%) was the most commonly perceived reason for using CAM. CAM therapies were mainly adopted for gastrointestinal problems (n=107, 21.4%) and paralysis (n=89, 17.8%). Most of the patients (n=382, 76.3%) had tried allopathic treatment prior to using CAM therapy for the same indication. A total of 279 patients (55.69%) were using more than 1 type of CAM therapy where the most commonly used therapies were Ayurveda (n=384, 76.7%) and yoga (n=141, 28.1%). The majority of the patients (n=425, 84.8%) reported that they would advise others to use CAM therapy.
Conclusion Use of CAM is more common among patients with chronic conditions especially gastrointestinal disorders and paralysis for which they had already tried allopathic medicine. The majority of the patients viewed CAM as beneficial, cheaper, and free of side effects. However, studies on safety and efficacy of these CAM therapies are promptly needed in this region.

Keywords Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) · CAM clinics · Patients · Pokhara · Western Nepal

Introduction
Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is a massive domain of the medical system comprising diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not presently considered to be a part of allopathic medicine. Complementary medicine is used along with allopathic medicine, whereas alternative medicine is used instead of allopathic medicine (NCCAM 2009; Ernst 2000). Several population-based studies in the developed countries such as in Australia, the UK, Taiwan, Singapore, and the USA reported that one half to two thirds of adults use CAM (Ceylan et al. 2009). In developing countries more than 70% of the population still depend on the complementary and alternative systems of medicine (Shaikh and Hatcher 2005). Various scholarly traditional medication systems such as Ayurveda, Amchi, homeopathy, traditional Chinese medicine, Tibetan medicine, shamanistic medicine (faith healing system), and folk medicines exist in Nepal (Gewali 2008). Among them, Ayurveda has been practiced since time immemorial (Koirala 2009). Some previous studies carried out in Nepal have shown that more than 50% of the population use CAM because of cultural beliefs, lack of modern health care facilities, and expensiveness of allopathic medicine. CAM practices are commonly found in

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